

SERVANTS OF THE STATE

A conversation with Daniel Ellsberg



Human complexities don't fit readily into the headlines, where men are more frequently symbols for what they have done than expressions of what they are. In the case of Daniel Ellsberg, his conveyance of the Pentagon Papers to the press has been treated almost exclusively as a public action, seemingly unconnected to dimensions of personal experience. As a result, the public has been left to ponder effects, the causes for which, like a missed landfall, lie hidden somewhere in the haze over the horizon.

The article following helps to repair that lack. Like Dr. John Parrish's memories of his tour as a medical officer in Vietnam (page 62), it implicitly assumes that such abstractions as

"issue" or "policy" have their roots always in the hard ground of individual experience.

The interview with Daniel Ellsberg was conducted last fall in Chicago by Studs Terkel, author of Division Street and Hard Times. Joining the discussion were Tony Russo, Ellsberg's former colleague at RAND who only two days before had been released from jail following a sentence for contempt (because he refused to testify in secret before a Los Angeles grand jury concerning his association with Ellsberg), and Eqbal Ahmad, a fellow of the Adlai Stevenson Institute who has been indicted as a member of the "Harrisburg Eight" for conspiracy to kidnap Presidential adviser Henry Kissinger.

TERKEL: Daniel Ellsberg, your name is known to quite a few Americans these days. You let the country and the world know about a series of documents called the Pentagon Papers. Where do we begin?

ELLSBERG: We could begin when I met Tony Russo, I guess, the first week I got to Saigon in 1965. I was there for the State Department. I'd volunteered to go out with General Lansdale, who had a vaguely defined job to work with political development in Vietnam. I ended up looking at the pacification program in the field and traveling around Saigon a great deal. Tony had been there before I arrived, working for the RAND Corporation, interviewing prisoners and defectors.

Because I'd worked for

RAND, I went over to the office soon after I got to Saigon to get filled in.

RUSSO: I remember that it was afternoon and I was the only person in the RAND office at the time. This fellow came to the door and said, "Hi, is this the RAND office?" I said, "Sure, come in. Have a seat, make yourself at home." And he said, "My name's Daniel Ellsberg."

We sat down and started talking and he said, "I've just gotten into town. Tell me what's happening here." So I begin to talk, and this guy pulls out a notebook and starts writing furiously. I said, "Who's this freak?"

As I was later to find out, this freak had a *thirst* for information, knowledge. He always wanted to know what was going on. He was always compiling information.

When I was satisfied and thought I understood a situation, he was still butting his head up against it. He was so stubborn.

TERKEL: Suppose you explain RAND. We think of RAND as involving intellectuals, men who are technicians and specialists. What's their work?

ELLSBERG: I'd have to answer that very differently now than if you'd asked me ten years ago. I worked for them, and you know I haven't said much about RAND because I've caused RAND a lot of trouble, a lot of it undeserved. Secretary of Defense Laird came down on them as a scapegoat for breaches in their system of secrecy. I could give Secretary Laird a list of cases when in the course of my daily work I

had to Xerox material in his suite of offices and bring it back, and I can say it was a lot easier than doing it at RAND.

TERKEL: I was thinking of RAND itself, of how brilliant young men, or old men, are working these days, or have been working in the past.

ELLSBERG: As Tony tells me one anecdote after another of his forty-seven days in jail, so many analogies come through. His description of the role of the informer in the jail struck me as analogous to the point of view of a number of intellectuals I've known in my life who serve the government, and who see themselves as spending their lives giving useful information to men in power. As long as you're convinced that the men in power are serving

humanity in one way or another, it can be a proud occupation. That's the way I felt about it when I worked for RAND. But as we came into an era at the end of the 50s and into the '70s, when we are more and more conscious that both at home and abroad the men in power have been corrupted by their power, I think these thinkers, researchers, analysts, intellectuals, who are performing their role, must be conscious that they are serving illegitimate purposes from a social, humane point of view. They're in the role, basically, of informers in a prison.

HMD: I am very interested in getting Dan's and Tony's reaction to this because these two persons are unique in that they have experienced and been for years very close to the seats of power in this country. And today, by their own choice, they are members of the powerless majority of mankind.

ELLSBERG: I don't feel powerless.

HMD: What I am asking is: how did the public look on the seats of power when you were working for the Pentagon or the State Department as a White House consultant? And how does it look now, as a member of the public who is in jeopardy for essentially an act of resistance against the war? Has there been any change in our perceptions of the institutions that wield power in this country?

ELLSBERG: I've become more and more conscious of how many people feel powerless in this country. And I suspect increasingly it's because they've been told they're powerless, for a long time, all their lives.

ROSSO: They've bought it.

ELLSBERG: They've bought it. Yeah, but they're indoctrinated along these lines by people who protect their own power that way. Because there are two parts to that message they hear: one part is, by *yourself*, you're powerless. The other side is: if you join up, you can share in this power, you can plug in. The power will flow through you; at least you'll be a part of it.

That double notion has a very great coercive effect in itself. It makes people terrified of the idea of being cut off from that machine. It's a kind of fear, a social control, that does not merely mean, "I'm going to have trouble finding a job if I lose this one," or "What will my friends say?" but an emotional, vague, gut fear, horror at the idea of being cut off.

TERKEL: Could I suggest this incident? I remember a cabdriver whose life was obviously pretty wretched. He was telling me of all his woes and personal humiliations. Suddenly, on the subject of Vietnam, he says, "By God, we gotta win, 'cause we gotta be number one." "We" being the government, the United States. He says "we" have to be number one because he is number nothing.

ELLSBERG: That's it. This set of attitudes forms a kind of society that's stable in a particular way, which gives power to particular people. This is the way I increasingly see it. I've been in no communication with anyone from RAND. On my part, I didn't want to entangle them unnecessarily. On their part, not one of the 500 professionals at RAND, where I worked nine years, has sent me a postcard or made a telephone call. I'm sure a number of them are sympathetic, but a great many, I'm sure, are very angry at me. My inference is

that they're afraid to be in any kind of communication with me.

I have a feeling that a lot of them see me with a kind of horror—not just anger, but with an awe of the sort that you'd have for an astronaut who stepped out of that capsule and cut his umbilical cord and just floated off into space and had become weightless, drifting in a black void, because he cut himself off from the capsule and from NASA, and the U.S. government, and the U.S. budget that supports that entire system—no salary, no Mama, no Papa. He's become part of a vast nothingness.

I think four-year-olds have fantasies like that, and that's just what the men in power are speaking to, those four-year-old fantasies of what the world would be like when the mother went away. And the mother is the U.S. Executive Branch.



TERKEL: The implication is that you feel liberated now?

ELLSBERG: Oh yeah. My wife Patricia knew me at that earlier period when I was in the Pentagon working for men who were in effect addicted to the flow of secret information that passed their desks. It was like electricity coursing through their veins. In fact, the speed of decision-making, flickering from one part of the world to another—a weapons system to be decided on, or one set of decisions about force levels, or big wars or little wars—from

moment to moment, almost a kaleidoscopic kind of effect, gave their lives an electric excitement to which they were clearly addicted and which they could not imagine living without.

That was before the dope craze. The specific dope that one hears about now, "speed," with its particularly apt name, would have described what they were doing. They were nervous men, constantly flipping pencils, constantly drumming on tables, cracking their knuckles, as they moved from one decision to another with this hypnotic fascination. The course of power, however, could only be theirs if they stayed in line, if they toed the mark, and in a way to be judged by their bosses minute by minute. They could lose access to that flow of information in minutes, if they made the wrong move. They would not be invited to the next White House meeting. They would no longer be in it, be part of it.

I remember once I came back from a trip to Vietnam when I was accompanying the Secretary of Defense, and we came down at Andrews Field. It was a foggy day at about six in the morning. We'd flown for seventeen hours, I think. Secretary McNamara flew in a tanker, a converted tanker. With one refueling you could go halfway around the world. It had no windows. As we came down in the fog, there were banks of television lights set up and reporters waiting with banks of microphones. As we came down off the plane, the world was waiting, in effect, and images—do you remember the old Joel McCrea movie, *Foreign Correspondent*?—you know, the glamour of this particular kind of living atop the...

TERKEL: ... man in a trench coat ...

ELLSBERG: ... yeah, the trench coat ... living on top of the world, the world waiting. And I remember describing that to Patricia, the electricity of that drama, and saying, "I hope I never become corrupted and addicted by that kind of drama."

These men were. Their superiors, up to the President, who could control their access to that kind of excitement, had total coercive power over them. So we're now back to your question of what are the real restraints that keep these men in line. Why did a George Ball, who expressed himself so clearly and with such foresight about the morass and horror that we were getting ourselves into, never get out of line and speak to the public about it, either when he was in or when he was out? All of these men really always want to get back into the government.

When the Pentagon Papers came out, George Ball, of course, received credit which was due him for what he'd said internally at the time. He spoke boldly, for a bureaucrat, and certainly with great foresight in 1965 and 1966 about where we were going.

I recently saw George Ball on a program—*Meet the Press*, I think it was, or *Face the Nation*, one of those—and they quoted to him what he had said internally, what he had felt about Vietnam. And then they quoted to him what he was saying publicly at the same time, which was exactly the opposite. And his answer was, "When you speak to the public, you take the Administration position. That's your role." He was saying parenthetically, "You want to keep your influence within the system ..."

At the time he was speaking of, he had been the Under Secretary of State, the number two man in the State Department. He had been con-

firmed by the Senate in that role. He was surely seen as a man of power. In explaining why he had felt perfectly easy about lying to the public about what his own true views were in matters of life and death, and why he felt unapologetic about admitting this now, years later, he said, "After all, we're just hired hands of the President." And I thought, is that the way for a high official of a republic to see himself? Is that why the Senate confirmed his appointment? So that he could be counted on to lie to them reliably when the President asked him to, on a matter of war and peace?

Those men have a self-image of powerlessness except as loyal servants, not of the Constitution, not of their countrymen, not of humanity, but of the man who hired them.

TERKEL: He used the phrase "hired hands"? He used the phrase? If ever there were the low guy on the totem pole, it's the hired hand. That's the way he saw himself?

ELLSBERG: Day laborer. But these men were not even day laborers. They were hour laborers. They could lose their job: they had their job on an option that could expire in thirty seconds, if their face showed the wrong expression in the course of a White House meeting.

Let me go back to where we were a moment ago. I met an Indian girl years ago, a Gandhian, who gave me a vision of a different way of living and resistance, of exercising power, nonviolently, in terms of telling truth, basically. You know, the Gandhian notion of *satyagraha* means "truth force," and truth-telling as a form of power. And I saw a time of great chaos in our society, looming chaos. As I talked to her, Martin Luther

King began to seem to me our hope, our last hope. He was killed that weekend ... You were with me, Eqbal, at that conference.

The next time I saw you here in Chicago, at a conference at the Adlai Stevenson Institute. By that time, in the spring of '68, I'd been working a good deal, behind the scenes, on the Vietnam policy speeches of Robert Kennedy. Then I saw him as the hope. So ... you remember it was while we were here at that conference that Robert Kennedy was killed. That's a way to feel powerless, and you start feeling powerless. I don't know.



AHMAD: I think we are all going through that kind of sense of helplessness. It's very sad that our hopes were so pinned on individuals, because only individuals seemed to promise an honest working of a system that seemed to have failed to be accountable and honest toward the public. I think it is that phenomenon that makes the death of people like Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King so very poignant and so risky.

TERKEL: Isn't Eqbal's point the key to almost everything that you've been saying all along, Dan and Tony? The fact that the death of certain individuals is so overwhelming. Life is so tenuous—it would seem, the life of humankind depends upon the lives of these particular individuals.

ELLSBERG: At that point I was still working for the President. When I came back from Vietnam, thinking that we must get out, my whole instinct had been to work for people who might be President. I would talk to anyone to tell him what I thought was the truth about Vietnam, so that he as President might be influenced by it. I said I would do that for George Wallace; I would have done it for Nixon. As a matter of fact, I did talk to Henry Kissinger, who was then working for Rockefeller. I talked to people who were Romney's representatives. I talked to Robert Kennedy—that's why I'd gotten to know Robert Kennedy and Ted Kennedy and the others. And I spoke a good deal several times to Humphrey and his assistants. In other words, I was looking for a President to get us out. I hadn't then read the Pentagon Papers and hadn't realized that Presidents are the men who feel, because of their responsibility, almost powerless to get us out of the war because they cannot face the humiliation that they personally, their parties, America in their name, would suffer if they did begot this failure.

At that very meeting, when we first met, Eqbal, one of the speakers, Tom Hayden, said something that was very arresting to me although I wasn't fully ready to accept it: "We should use Vietnam as a mirror." He said, "If you want to see how the United States acts toward revolution, watch us act in Vietnam."

I wasn't yet ready to accept the idea that this was the pattern, that it was something other than an aberration. But I've come far enough now to see not only that but to see that Attica can be used as a mirror of many things in our society, and above all as a mirror of bu-

reocracy. Because in the prisons, as I've seen not only through talking to Tony and visiting him but from other friends of mine who are in prison, the bureaucracy is simply the perfection of the bureaucracies that I worked in in the Defense Department and the State Department. The invisibility is more perfect—a bureaucrat's dream; the secrecy, the freedom to use coercive violence secretly, and to lie about it even more secretly than we can do in Laos. In Laos we kill more secretly than in Vietnam, with Laos being less accessible than Vietnam to reporters. The prisons are less accessible than Laos, almost totally inaccessible.

RUSO: The theme of the prisoner is the metaphor that explains the whole situation. I had a great deal of experience in Vietnam with prisoners, with Vietcong prisoners. I worked for the RAND Corporation, and we had access to the jails in Vietnam. I spent eighteen months intensively involved in interviewing prisoners throughout Vietnam in virtually every ail of any consequence.

In the spring of 1965, I became aware that prisoners were being tortured throughout Vietnam, in all phases of their capture: as they were captured on the battlefield; between the battlefield and the portable tiger cage; between the portable tiger cage and the more substantial jail. They would get killed, summarily executed, during any of these phases.

I was shocked. But I didn't talk too much about that. I could always allude to it. But in Vietnam, amongst the so-called toughminded bureaucrats, military and civilian, none was labeled as being sentimental or a do-gooder—that kind of thing—and one's opinion was dismissed: "He's just a bleeding heart." So I

tried to avoid that image.

I first related this to my superiors in the RAND Corporation. I said, "Hey, a lot is going on here that a lot of people don't know about. Prisoners are being tortured and that's not good for our side. Because when the Vietcong find out that prisoners . . ." How naïve I was! The Vietcong had known for twenty-five years how the situation was. From their point of view it hadn't changed, and the Americans were just like the French, regardless of what we call our policies.

There were two gentlemen who worked for RAND in the early days of this project, whom I retain a great deal of respect for: Professor Joseph Zasloff at the University of Pittsburgh and Professor John Donnell at Temple University. They were there for a very short time to get the project going, and they did a very good job. They even went back to the Pentagon, gave briefings, and they wrote letters to military personnel about the torture of prisoners. I wasn't present at the briefings.

ELLSBERG: I was.

RUSO: You were?

ELLSBERG: I was in the Pentagon then, working as special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, John McNaughton. He died in 1967, tragically, in a plane crash that killed a lot of his family, just when I'd come back from Vietnam. In December of 1964, as I remember, just before we began the bombing of North Vietnam, which was in February of 1965, Zasloff and Donnell came to brief this study, RAND's study. They were describing the motivation of the Vietcong, why they were fighting, what had led them to join the Vietcong, and what their feelings were

toward their own officers, toward their country. And their dedication, nationalism, competence—which you learned a lot about in dealing with them . . .

RUSO: Joe Zasloff described the Vietcong cadre as possessing a monkish quality—commitment was so deep and so thorough. When Zasloff and Donnell gave their briefing to McNaughton and, I think, State Department and Defense Department officials, McNaughton's reaction was, "If the Vietcong are like that, we better get out of there right now!"

ELLSBERG: That wasn't quite it.

RUSO: I wasn't there. You were. So please clarify it . . .

ELLSBERG: You were very close. The exact line was, "If what you say in that briefing is true, we're fighting on the wrong side."

RUSO: Aha.

ELLSBERG: That was December 1964. I don't think he doubted that it was true, though it was very startling to hear. You didn't usually hear your enemy described in this much detail, human detail. When you were mentioning a monastic quality, I remembered my friend Tran Ngoc Chau, who was, when I knew him in Vietnam, a colonel in charge of the pacification program. He'd been under Diem and had worked with Americans for years, but when he was young he'd been with the Vietminh, fighting the French, for four years. He'd become a battalion commander and eventually a division political adviser. I remember his saying that one of the great disillusioning shocks was to go far behind the lines at one point to discover a cadre officer whom he

had respected tremendously living with a woman and wearing very good sandals instead of the rubber tires. It was just like discovering his father in adultery or something. It didn't seem at all consistent with his picture of what an officer should be. That was what was so amazing, the way defectors would describe their superiors and the respect they had for them.



There's another incident, a significant one as I look back on it. It was the week that I left the RAND Corporation. I was asked to come to an advisory group—it was supposedly a research group—of academics, whose work, in some degree, was funded by AID. The meeting included nearly every academic in this country who spoke Vietnamese, sitting around a table. Now a very small table can accommodate that group.

There was a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge of Vietnam at that table. I'd been invited to the meeting. I didn't know entirely the nature of the group, and Tony was there. We were hearing research papers. The first day was very stimulating. These were the people that I wanted to talk to in this country. I could learn a lot from them, and I did learn a lot from them, took a lot of notes.

By the second day I began to feel uneasy and needed to know more just what the nature of the group was, and I asked what its purpose was.

According to some of the academics, although the funding was from AID, it was for pure research. This was a basically altruistic function, and this sort of thing does occur in the government, where basic research is funded. We're back to this role of the intellectual and the state, essentially. The only function of the group was to do basic research on Vietnam. An AID representative present, however, saw it differently. He saw the relationship as an implementation of the government programs, whether the researchers wanted to see it that way or not.

Well, I'd just left RAND that very week in order to be able to speak freely, in a way that seemed impossible to do at RAND, and not because RAND officers forbade me, but because every time I criticized the war I caused great apprehension among all of my colleagues that they were about to lose their contract, and hence their jobs. I felt that this had been going on for about six or nine months, and it was unfair of me to keep subjecting them indefinitely to that kind of apprehension.

When I discovered the relationship of this research group to AID, I felt called on to say right away that, without any disrespect to any of the individuals there, I would have to separate myself from the group! "I have only one thing to say to officials on the implementation of our programs in Vietnam. Get out of Vietnam. And I don't have to be in this group to say it."

Tony, you may remember that the AID man there got very distressed at this, remember? He said, "Don't do this, Dan. You're just the sort of man we want here for this kind of advice. We need you, the government needs you, and you can do good work in this relationship." He said, "This gives you access, it

gives you a chance to say what you think to the officials. And we want to hear that." He ended up very impassioned by saying, "Don't cut yourself off. Don't cut your throat." I had to say to him, "I'm not cutting my throat." I said, "Life exists outside the Executive Branch. You know, there is nourishment. You can sustain life out there."

Somebody who's worked for the government, and especially someone who hopes to work again for the government, feels, in almost every case, constrained to be silent about his opinions if he disagrees with official policy. If he agrees with it, he will express his opinions in public, truthfully and freely, and with no risk. If he disagrees with it, he will be silent, even if he is very bold internally at expressing his opinions honestly to his superiors. One can do that. The rule that you can't break is talking out of school.

One of the reasons for my leaving RAND was my desire to speak freely about the way in which our government had been an accomplice in the imprisonment of my friend Tran Ngoc Chau. He had been pacification head in Vietnam. Then, as a deputy from Kien Hoa, the province whose capital was the town that had to be destroyed in order to be saved in Tet, he had been secretary general of the lower house of the National Assembly. He was jailed by Thieu ostensibly for seeing his Communist brother, but actually for exposing Thieu's corruption of the lower house, and because he was also calling for negotiations.

The Supreme Court of Vietnam found Chau's arrest, trial, and sentence unconstitutional. He is still in jail. This was all, in effect, with the connivance or tacit agreement of our embassy and our

ambassador there, Ellsworth Bunker, and I just felt it essential that I be free to say this publicly.



RUSO: The roughest time in my life began the day I arrived in Saigon. I felt this frustration, and the only thing that saved me was the fact that other people felt it too. My younger colleagues at RAND—there were three, four, who were my age—we used to sit and talk amongst ourselves about the torture of prisoners in Vietnam.

I have finally understood why we torture people in Vietnam—because we torture people here. The American advisers to the people who run the prisons in Vietnam are retired wardens, retired policemen, retired highway patrolmen, people who work in the so-called law-and-order field here in the United States.

I knew a man who worked for USAID public safety who had been a warden here in the United States. I used to try to talk to him and try to get some reason out of him concerning the prisons, the condition of prisons in Vietnam. He would always come back to his experience with prisons here in the United States. I would keep talking to him about Vietnamese prisoners; he would keep talking to me about American prisoners. We were always in different places. He was trying to get across to me that convicts are scum. He said, "We go to all this trouble to keep them in prisons when we should take them out in a ship

and drop them out at sea, just throw them overboard. They're worthless human beings. There's no reason to keep them alive. They're no good to anybody." When I look back on the experience of the past forty-seven days, it all falls into place. Before I went to jail I had an intellectual understanding of this, and I felt, "Sure, I know, I don't have to go to jail to understand that. I know it's bad. I know that people misunderstand. I know they're biased. I know there's a good deal of racism." Had I not gone to prison, I think that I never would have understood a lot of things.

ELLSBERG: There's a phrase that Gandhians use a lot that translates as "speaking truth to power." Somebody came up with it spontaneously recently in a suggestion as a title for a book of writings that I have done in the past, most of it while I was working for the government. It made me very uneasy. I find myself very skeptical about that phrase; at the least, it's ambiguous, because certainly all of our former colleagues at RAND, or in the government, I think, would have thought of what they were doing, their professional lives, as "speaking truth to power." To be sure, they were speaking truth for power, and some of them were also writing lies for power, but they figured that that was the price they paid for the right that they got, on government payroll or on government contract, to speak truth to power. And it certainly seemed to me, increasingly, that there was so much self-deception involved that I had to stand back and really think hard about it. About just what kind of truth you spoke to power when you were working for power, when you found your whole livelihood dependent on it, when you were con-

stantly afraid of what power would do to you if you spoke the wrong truth.

I haven't seen Tony from the day he went to jail until the day before yesterday, when he won his victory and his right to speak in open court. I'd seen him several times, visiting in jail, always with a plate glass in between us, speaking through a tube, other times with a guard sitting next to us—so I haven't had a chance to really tell him what came down.

The day I was arraigned in Los Angeles on two counts related to the Pentagon Papers was the day that Tony finally had to go to jail on his civil contempt. Tony had a statement to make, and he had this crowd of television people, reporters, taking down his statement. Some of them followed him in as he went into the courthouse. On the evening news that night, they showed Tony going into the courthouse, right down the halls of the federal courthouse, till he came to a certain door. He went behind the door. The door opened again briefly—this was on television too—he came out and grasped me and said, "Goodbye, brother," and then he disappeared again behind that door.

I got a call the next day, in the afternoon, from Tony, telling me that he'd just gotten out of an isolation cell where he'd been chained and manacled. And I couldn't believe what he was telling me. It sounded fantastic. That a man could be manacled and chained in a county jail with 18 hours after network television had featured him on the evening news. I got a lot of Tony's story from a deputy at the jail. He was on the watch. Tony had been released to him finally, after they'd taken the manacles off, he chain off. He showed me the log; he showed me where Tony had been kept. He men-

tioned that Tony was very angry when he came in, very irritated. I said, "Really, why was that?" I hadn't told him that I'd heard the story from Tony already. And he said, "Well, he'd been kept waiting booking all night, and he'd been put in the isolation cell..." And I said, "Really? Is that all? He didn't say anything about being manacled and chained?" He said, "No, no." I said, "He came in here to complain about being in the isolation cell and he didn't mention the fact that he had been chained?"

After he'd shown me the log, which ended at ten-thirty, where it said, "Inmate Russo is now ready to cooperate with the booking process," I asked him why it said nothing about the chaining. And he said, "Oh, that's normal, that's routine. They do that so often, they wouldn't log that." That made it clear he wasn't getting any unusual treatment. They weren't discriminating against him. He was just getting normal treatment, for a noncompliant, nonsubmissive person, a person who wasn't acting like an inmate.

Then the deputy began talking to me more openly. Tony, do you remember this guy at all? ... Do you remember his face?

RUSSO: I do.

ELLSBERG: He said, "You know, I said to Mr. Russo when he came in that I'm here for the same reason you are. I'm a prisoner here." I said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well, it's a jail, isn't it? I'm here, aren't I?" I said, "Well, you go home at night, don't you?" He said, "Well..." and he sort of shrugged.

Later in the conversation, as we were waiting for someone with authority to let me in to visit Tony the next day, he went on. "I have to say I

admire you and Russo. I admire your guts," he said. "I don't have that courage." So I said, "What makes you think you don't have the courage?" And he said, "After all, I'm in sort of a military outfit here." I said, "I was in the Defense Department when I was authorized access to the Pentagon Papers, working for it." He said, "Well, I don't know. It's a different background."

Now, thinking back later, I would have liked to pursue that with him, and ask him just what it was he saw in his background that made him think that he was prevented from doing what we had done. He said, "I wouldn't be here if I weren't being punished. It's a jail." And later I was told by some reporters that that's true, that the men get put there really as a kind of punishment within the police. Did you know that?

I looked around—we were in a windowless room in the middle of the building. Tony pointed out to me that it's a windowless building, like the windowless tanker I mentioned earlier that the Secretary of Defense flew around the world in. You could be in that building for a year and never see sunlight unless you went to court. No reporters could come in to see Tony. Reporters wanted to come in to see what had happened to the man they'd been interviewing the day before, and see the cell he'd been held in. But a reporter can't see a federal prison. There are no windows in that building, in order to keep people from looking in. It isn't to keep prisoners from looking out.

RUSSO: You know, Dan, that deputy did tell me that he was a prisoner too. I remember when he came, I was chained up in the isolation cell and he came, he stood there, and the door was open and he said, "Would you like a cigarette?"

He said, "Come and have a cup of coffee." Of course, at the time I thought he was trying to buy me off. But, boy, what you say!

ELLSBERG: He said, "I'm here for the same reason you are..."

RUSSO: Really?

ELLSBERG: Yes. He said a lot of other things. When he talked about being in jail, I said, "Well, there's lots of jails in this society, all kinds of jails." And he said, "Yeah, and jails in people's minds..."

RUSSO: Fantastic.

ELLSBERG: I looked at him and I thought, "Who am I talking to?" But here was a man so conscious of where he was. He said, "I wouldn't be here if I weren't being punished. Of course, I could have left. They gave me the chance to quit. I'd throw twenty years down the drain. But forget it, I'm here." He was doing his time.

TERKEL: It appears that Daniel Ellsberg and Tony Russo are no longer inmates, and the jailors are as jailed as inmates.



ELLSBERG: When I went to Vietnam I had a number of thresholds in my mind that an American official, I felt, should never cross. I'd set out some guideposts for myself as to what I would never collaborate in, knowing the risks

in a counterinsurgency war, the kind of muck you can get into, from the French experience, from the German experience. Torture was one of them. I'd always said to myself in the Defense Department, "If I ever find evidence that we are condoning or systematically engaging in torture, I will not only quit this effort and the government, but I will be on the outside, speaking out, very forcibly."

Now I did learn, of course, that the Vietnamese did torture their prisoners, including ones that we turned over to them. I protested against it in various ways. I asked about the possibility that American soldiers were engaged in any such practice. Although I heard of individual incidents, I never did hear of any policy. This was in '65 and '67. I was very struck when Colonel Herbert jeopardized his career—sacrificed his career—this year, finally, to bring charges of the systematic torture he had witnessed by Americans. That was very shocking to me, even at this late date. Because I hadn't really heard evidence of that sort, of the *systematic* pattern that he described, even this late.

When the Pentagon Papers came out and my wife Patricia was reading them at my request—one reason I was really anxious for her to look at them was that she had come to worry about whether it was important enough, whether it mattered enough to be taking the risks I was taking, in view of the fact that over a period of almost two years so many officials had not seen them as that important, and had not been willing to take such risks themselves or to press the point. She said, "Maybe they're right; maybe you're wrong. Maybe it isn't that important." She finally read those passages. She read the

accounts of what had gone on when I was in the Defense Department in 1964 and 1965, when we were planning the bombing of North Vietnam and beginning to engage in it.

She read passages that were very familiar to me, words about "turning up the screws" on Hanoi leadership. This is at the highest level. This is the Assistant Secretary, Under Secretary, Secretary of Defense and State level. They talked about ratchet effects, and the analogy, in parentheses, in the memo is to a tennis net that is lowered as you turn the handle, and then raised again. The explanation being that the effect would be greater on the Hanoi leadership if the people should have a pause in the bombing and then have the bombing come back to them. The immediate image was that of the rack, the rack you're turning with the ratchet...

RUSO: Or the gallows...

ELLSBERG: Right.

RUSO: In the Cuban missile crisis they used the phrase, "to tighten the noose..."



ELLSBERG: That's right. The other suggestion evoked the image of flooding the dikes, bombing the dikes. They said, "This will not drown people, but it will starve them unless we offer food in return for negotiations." These were the words written, not by under-

lings, but by Assistant Secretaries and higher, who had been to Yale and Harvard, and who were very respected men in our society.

Patricia got up from reading these and came to me with tears in her eyes and said, "This is the language of torturers." She was talking about pieces of paper that were written while I was in the Pentagon, working in State and Defense, with these people, being part of it, criticizing it. I wrote some of the only criticism of the bombing policy written in Defense, a strong attack within the Defense. But I lost my point. Yet I stayed in that system, I participated in it. And thus, in the end, shared full responsibility with that policy.

So, Tony's point: our unconcern for torture in one field reflects our unconcern with torture of Americans. I think there's a very direct analogy. After all, Attica shows us what we do at home to people who are not regarded as American citizens anymore, and who, as Vice-President Agnew's description of them shows clearly, are regarded as less than human. What my wife's reaction to these documents, written while I worked for Defense, showed me was that they were a mirror of how we act to people who aren't American citizens, who never had the fortune of being born American citizens, and who are certainly less than human, being Asiatics.

RUSO: What you say, Dan, just brought it home to me: the theme of the prisoner runs from the county jail to Hanoi. The failure of President Nixon to negotiate in Paris means he is using our prisoners of war, the Americans who are held by the North Vietnamese, as political pawns. He's playing with their "good time."

When a prisoner here in the United States is sentenced to jail, for every month he automatically gets seven days "good time." That means seven days' time off his sentence. If you become a neuter when you're an inmate, then seven days accumulate every month and that's taken off your total sentence. If you do not knuckle under, if you refuse to be broken, your "good time" is taken away from you. You serve out the whole term. If you become an informer or if you cozy up to the authorities, then you get more "good time." That means you could get up to fifteen days, twenty days a month; and with a ten-year sentence you might find yourself out after one year.

ELLSBERG: It's like being able to retire earlier. That's what's wrong with the notion of "speaking truth to power," as it applies to intellectuals, to social scientists, to researchers who work for the government, or officials, bureaucrats. How much truth can you expect to be spoken by people who see themselves as prisoners, and who see their "good time"—which is to say this retirement period, that date on which they'll be free of what they see as a prison—is dependent on whether they say the right things or the wrong things? You don't influence power that way. You share in the crimes of power that way. You become an accomplice totally. You live the life not of an intellectual but of an informer.

This war is not going to be ended ever by people who see themselves in their official capacity as powerless except as they do the bidding of their powerful superiors, who see themselves as nothing unless they have a direct dependence upon and relation to these powerful people. It will have to be ended by free men. □